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SUBJECT: DPP Primary for Kaohsiung Mayoral election - High Stakes,
High Tension

REF: A) 2006 TAIPEI 1380 B) 2006 TAIPEI 1461

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11. Summary: After much public and party debate on who should represent the DPP in the December 2006 Kaohsiung mayoral election, former Council of Labor Affairs (CLA) Chairperson Chen Chu garnered 80 percent of DPP member votes (19,765) during the May 28 DPP primary to become the party's mayoral candidate. Legislator Guan Bi-ling, who registered to run in the DPP primary, suddenly announced her withdrawal from the primary on May 25 after the DPP Central Standing Committee refused attempts by high profile members to draft Acting Kaohsiung Mayor Yeh Chu-lan to stand as its candidate. However, Chen's win in the primary does not end her woes, as former-premier and former-Kaohsiung Mayor Frank Hsieh as well as the Taiwan Solidarity Union's (TSU) Lo Chi-ming line up against Chen Chu's candidacy, claiming her involvement in the KRTC scandal bodes ill for a pan-green victory in Kaohsiung. End summary.

12. Although incumbent DPP Legislator Guan Bi-ling and former CLA Chairperson Chen Chu both registered early and campaigned hard for the May 28 DPP primary former Premier Frank Hsieh and DPP Chairman Yu Shyi-kun tried to include Acting Kaohsiung Mayor Yeh Chu-lan in the primary. In proposing to reopen the primary registration or use only polling to decide the DPP candidate, they argued that winning the Kaohsiung mayoral seat required Kaohsiung Acting Mayor Yeh Chu-lan's universal acceptance by local factions and her pristine image. Yeh, untainted by the Kaohsiung Rapid Transit Corporation (KRTC) scandal, in which may of the DPP's most significant players were implicated (see reftel A), arguably was the only candidate who could guarantee the KRTC scandal won't harm the DPP this December in its local mayoral election.

13. The DPP Central Standing committee overruled the two proposals on May 24. In highly public arguments, Premier Su Tseng-chang and New Tide faction leader Wu Nai-jen along with some other committee members disagreed with Yu and Hsieh, emphasizing that fairness and democratic procedure required adherence to party primary rules. The committee then decided to maintain its original primary mechanism to select its candidate for the Kaohsiung mayoral race.

14. When the DPP closed all doors to drafting Yeh, Legislator Guan Bi-ling announced suddenly on May 25 that she would withdraw from the primary and terminate her campaign, thus making Chen Chu the sole candidate running in the primary. Guan stated to the press that she respected the Party Central Standing Committee's decision, but said that the real dispute of who is the most suitable candidate really had not been resolved. However, for the sake of party

solidarity, she decided to end her campaign and gave her blessing to Chen Chu.

15. A week before the primary, in an exclusive interview with the China Times, former Premier Frank Hsieh stated that Chen Chu's role in the KRTC scandal would definitely make her an easy target for the opposition to attack. Hsieh opined that the DPP and Chen Chu would lose the Kaohsiung mayoral election because she faces so many obstacles to her election bid. Hsieh reiterated his support for Legislator Guan Bi-ling. As reported in the June 2 Taiwan Times, Taiwan Solidarity Union Kaohsiung mayoral candidate Lo Chi-ming also struck out at Chen Chu, alleging a broad-ranging conspiracy theory placing Chen Chu at the heart of the KRTC scandal and its destructive aftermath. Chen Chu's campaign office responded that Lo's allegation is baseless, urging the pan green camp to consolidate and defend the DPP's rule in southern Taiwan.

16. Some local DPP members have expressed opposition to Hsieh's interference in selecting a mayoral candidate, saying the primary is part of the DPP tradition and regulations. They argued that if the DPP yields to political pressure between local factions, it will lose one of its few remaining demonstrated core values, that of respecting and using democratic methods to select candidates. These locals believe Chen Chu's strong lead in most polls clearly reflects strong support among Kaohsiung residents.

17. During the May 28 primary, Chen Chu garnered 80 percent (19,765) of DPP member votes making her candidacy irrefutable. Although Guan Bi-ling has pulled out from the race, Chen Chu, however, now insists that the DPP proceed on to the traditional second stage of a primary, which is polling. Although Guan feels that is not necessary, she has agreed that according to the DPP's primary rules, a primary has to proceed into its second stages unless all

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candidates agree to terminate the process.

18. When asked how she would build a coalition between factions (see reftel B) after the primary, Chen Chu pointed out that the damage done to the DPP by multiple instances of corruption is worse than any existing factional struggle. In terms of being a "soft target" for the KMT, she clarified that had she done anything illegal Chairperson of CLA, she would have been exposed by labor brokers long before the KRTC scandal broke. The DPP has lost people's faith, she said, because of corruption in the DPP administration. She strongly urged legal authorities to thoroughly investigate those cases and remove involved officials from their posts. Only in doing so could the DPP ever hope to win back the people's support and faith. She described the DPP as a sinking boat, warning that while the whole party's basic survival is at stake, no one should think too far ahead to the 2008 presidential election.

19. Comment. Plagued by a relentless series of scandals following the Thai labor riots (ref A), maintaining Kaohsiung City under DPP rule seems to have become a goal of desperation for the party. Its pleas to members and voters to maintain faith and keep a high morale despite their disappointment and low popularity polls numbers for President Chen reflect that sense of urgency. Calculating its chance of winning Taipei's mayoral seat as slender, the Kaohsiung mayoral election appears to be the party's last hope to provide momentum and give the DPP a shot at winning the 2008 presidential election. End comment.

THIELE

YOUNG